

# **G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center**



## **LOCAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

Photo by Scott Watts

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## **About this Facility**

This medical center provides primary, second and tertiary medical, neurological and mental health inpatient care. Services include hemodialysis, sleep studies, substance abuse treatment, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), hematology/oncology, and rehabilitation programs. Both primary and specialized outpatient services are available, including such specialized programs as: ambulatory surgery, spinal cord injury, neurology, infectious disease, substance abuse, PTSD, readjustment counseling, and mental health diagnostic and treatment programs. Comprehensive health care is available for female veteran patients. An 86-bed Community Living Center (including a palliative care unit), community nursing homes, three 150-bed state veterans nursing homes, VA community clinics, and a variety of outpatient programs are utilized to support the needs of aging veterans.

This medical center is the Clinic of Jurisdiction for the State of Mississippi and provides administrative support to the South Central VA Healthcare Network (VISN 16), the Veterans Outreach Center, the Veterans Benefits Administration Regional Office, and the National Cemetery in Natchez.

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) accredits the G.V. (Sonny) Medical Center. Joint Commission's mission is to improve the quality of care provided to the public through the provision of healthcare accreditation and related services that support performance improvement in healthcare organizations. We've been awarded accreditation with commendation, because we strive to provide the very best possible care, and we've proven it by meeting Joint Commission's standards for high quality health care.





**G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center**

601- 362-4471

or

1-800-949-1009

Appointment/Scheduling ext. 6100

Volunteer Services ext. 1391

Patient Education ext. 6616

Release of Information ext. 1566

Pharmacy 601-364-1270  
or  
1-800-949-1009  
ext. 1270

**PRIMARY CARE CLINICS**

PC Blue	(601) 364-1549
PC Green	(601) 364-5871
PC Purple	(601) 364-6316
PC Silver	(601) 364-1552
Home Based	(601) 364-5460
Primary Care	

**COMMUNITY BASED**

**OUTPATIENT CLINICS(CBOCs)**

Columbus	(662) 244-0391
Greenville	(662) 332-9872
Hattiesburg	(601) 296-3530
Kosciusko	(662) 289-1800
McComb	(601) 250-0965
Meridian	(601)482-3275
Natchez	(601)442-7141

## **ADDICTIVE DISORDERS TREATMENT PROGRAM(ADTP)**

601-364-1254

The ADTP Program offers comprehensive substance use and co-occurring disorder evaluation and treatment to eligible Veterans. We follow practice guidelines published jointly by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense, as well as those published by the American Psychiatric Association and the American Society of Addiction Medicine.

**Referrals** may be made by physicians, employers, or other professionals, as well as by family members or Veterans themselves.

### **PROGRAMS OFFERED**

- **Individual Outpatient Program**(Day Treatment Program/Residential Treatment Program)
- **Detoxification Program**
- **Psychiatric Stabilization Program**
- **Family Recovery Program**
- **Substance Use and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Program(SUPT)**
- **Dual Diagnosis Treatment Program(DDTP)**
- **Continuing Care Program**
- **Harm Reduction Program**
- **Tobacco Cessation Clinic**

## **VA CAREGIVER SUPPORT SERVICES**

1-855-260-3274

## **LOCAL CAREGIVER SUPPORT SERVICES**

601-362-4471 ext. 5460

VA offers a number of services that can provide you with the support that's right for you. Whether you and the Veteran you care for could use some help at home or you just need someone to listen, we're here to support you. Asking for help isn't always easy – especially if you're not exactly sure what kind of support would be the best fit for your needs. Learn more about how VA's trained professionals can help you find the services and support that are right for you and the Veteran you care for.

Below are the various services available to Family Caregivers of Veterans. If you'd like additional information or are interested in signing up for any of the services listed below, contact VA's Caregiver Support Line or your local Caregiver Support Coordinator for assistance.

- **Adult Day Health Care (ADHC) Centers**
- **Home-Based Primary Care**
- **Skilled Home Care**
- **Homemaker and Home Health Aide Program**
- **Home Telehealth**
- **Respite Care**
- **Home Hospice Care**

## **CLINICAL VIDEO TELEHEALTH (CVT)**

601-362-4471 X 5460

If you have a long term health problem such as High Blood Pressure, Diabetes (sugar problems), fluid problems (weak heart), or lung problems CVT may be for you. This system allows the provider to see and /or hear you over the home monitoring unit.

CVT uses a machine to see the patient in the home. This device allows the provider and patient to speak to and see each other. The provider can examine you, listen to your heart/lungs and even take pictures. CVT is easy to use. The equipment is offered to you if you have a chronic disease process at no additional cost. If you are interested contact your primary care provider.

**VETERANS CRISIS LINE**  
1-800-273-8255 and **Press 1**

**LOCAL VETERANS CRISIS CONTACTS**

601-362-4471 ext. 3979

601-362-4471 ext. 5138

601-362-4471 ext. 6167

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call or send a text message to **838255** to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.



## **VA ELIGIBILITY & ENROLLMENT**

1-877-222-VETS(8387)

## **LOCAL VA ELIGIBILITY & ENROLLMENT**

601-362-4471 ext. 1511 or ext. 3857

All Veterans are encouraged to enroll in the VA Health Care System. To begin the process, please complete an application for health care benefits. You can complete and submit the form online at <http://www.jackson.va.gov/patients/eligibility.asp> or you may print the form and mail it to us at:

G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center  
Business Office-Eligibility  
1500 E. Woodrow Wilson Drive  
Jackson, MS 39216-5199

You can also bring the form to the medical center. The eligibility office is located on the 1st floor in Module A.

## **HOMELESS VETERAN PROGRAM**

1-877-424-3838

## **LOCAL HOMELESS VETERAN PROGRAM**

601- 362-4471 ext. 5504

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is taking decisive action to end Veteran homelessness in five years. All Veterans at risk for homelessness or attempting to exit homelessness must have easy access to programs and services including Prevention, Housing Support, Treatment, Employment and Job Training.

## **JACKSON REGIONAL OFFICE**

**1-800-827-1000**

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides a variety of services and benefits to honorably discharged veterans of the U.S. Military and their dependents. The purpose of the Jackson Regional Office is to assist Mississippi veterans, their dependents and survivors, in contacting the nearest VA facility to inquire about their veterans benefits or health care services.

## **MENTAL HEALTH OUTPATIENT CLINIC TEAM**

601-362-4471, ext. 1242

The Mental Health Outpatient Clinic is a follow-up team that provides mental health evaluation, treatment, and follow-up for general mental health patients and their families (as applicable). The program provides scheduled visits, as well as walk-in services for urgent mental health needs. The program utilizes the case management approach to treatment.

Services include:

- Screening and assessment
- Crisis Intervention
- Service planning and coordination
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Medication management

## **MOVE**

601-362-4471 ext. 6184

The MOVE!® Program is designed for Veterans enrolled in the VA healthcare system who want assistance with managing their weight. Typically, the program is offered to Veterans who are overweight or obese.

The program promotes healthy lifestyle changes in Veterans. Through this program they are offering pedometers and scales, nutritional counseling and lots of encouragement. Would you like to feel and look better? Then "Get on the MOVE". Enrolled veterans, contact your primary care provider and ask how you can join the MOVE program.

**MY HEALTHeVET**  
601-362-4471 ext. 1516

My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet is a free, online personal health record. It is available 24/7, wherever there is Internet access. If you are a VA patient and have completed the In-Person Authentication process, you can:

- participate in Secure Messaging with your primary health care team members
- view key portions of your DoD Military Service Information
- get your VA Wellness Reminders
- view your VA Appointments
- view your VA Labs
- view your VA Allergies

Additional information can be obtained online at [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)

**OEF/OIF PROGRAM**  
601-362-4471 ext. 3998

The Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Program offers case management and advocacy services to all Veterans who have served in combat since November 11, 1998 and are transitioning to civilian life.

## **VET CENTER**

1-866-644-5371

## **LOCAL VET CENTER**

601-965-5727

The Local Vet Center offer a wide range of services to help you make a successful transition from military to civilian life. You've earned these benefits and there is no cost to you or your family members. Services include

- individual & group counseling
- marital and family counseling
- bereavement counseling
- medical & benefits referrals
- employment counseling



## **WOMEN VETERANS PROGRAM**

601-362-4471 ext. 5879

The Women Veterans Health Care Program is proud to serve the needs of our women Veterans. We are eager to meet the needs of a growing women Veterans population. We also provide women Veterans will a full range of reproductive health services necessary for optimal health throughout their lives. Our vision is to provide the highest quality care to every woman Veteran.

## OTHER RESOURCES

- American Heart Association 1-800-242-8721  
**Local**  
601-321-1200
- American Stroke Association 1-888-478-7653
- American Lung Association 1-800-586-4872  
**Local**  
601-206-5810
- Department of Mental Health 1-877-210-8513  
**Local**  
601-359-1288
- MS Department of Health 1-866-458-4948
- Aids Hotline 1-800-826-2961
- Elder Abuse 1-800-222-8000
- HIV/STD 1-888-343-7373
- Women's Health 1-800-721-7222
- MS Department of Human Services 1-800-345-6347  
**Local**  
601-359-4500
- National Family Caregiver Association 1-800-896-3650
- MS tobacco Quit Line 1-800-784-8669



## **HEALTH PROMOTION AND DISEASE PREVENTION**

### **HEALTHY LIVING MESSAGES**

Bettie Sanders, MSN, FNP-BC  
HPDP Program Manager

Mirella P. Auchus, PhD, MBA  
Health Behavior Coordinator



## **BE INVOLVED IN YOUR HEALTH CARE**

### **How do I become involved in my own health care?**

- To help your health care team provide you with better care, make sure you give them complete information about your current health.
- Let your team know about your health problems, your concerns about your health, any past illnesses, and past hospitalizations.
- Be sure to tell your team about all medications you take. Remember to include over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbals.

### **How do I plan for my health care visit?**

- Before your visit, write down the questions and concerns you want to ask your team. Make sure to let your team know about your questions at the beginning of each visit.
- Share your ideas and beliefs about your health problems and treatments with your team. Talk with your team about any other matters related to your health.
- Tell your health care team about any stressful aspects of your life that affect your health and your ability to manage daily activities.

### **How can I help my health care team create a treatment plan that will work for me?**

- Work with your health care team to create your treatment plan and share in making decisions about your health care.
- Talk with your provider about the treatment options you prefer.
- Ask your team to clarify anything that's not clear to you.
- Tell your team if you have any problems following your treatment plan or if your condition changes.
- Speak up if you have any concerns about the care you are receiving or if you think something is wrong.

### **How can I get the most out of my visit?**

- Ask your provider for written information and instructions that you can keep and share with your family or caregiver.
- Get information about your health problems from your health care team and the MyHealthVet website.
- Know the names of your medicines and why you take each one.
- Ask when and how you will get the results of any tests or treatments.
- Ask your team for the name and telephone number of the person to call if you have a problem with symptoms, medications or treatments.
- Bring a family member or friend to your appointment to help you.



## **STRIVE FOR A HEALTHY WEIGHT**

Did you know that your weight will remain stable if you eat close to the same number of calories that your body uses? To maintain your weight, engage in regular physical activity, eat wisely and weigh yourself regularly. If you are normal weight, congratulations! Read more information to help you manage your weight.

### **How do I know if I am at a healthy weight?**

- If you are gaining weight, you are taking in more calories than your body is using. These extra calories are stored as fat, and you will gain weight. If you are losing weight, you are eating fewer calories than your body is using. Your body is using stored fat cells for energy, so your weight is decreasing.
- A simple way for you to know if you are at a healthy weight is to know your body mass index (BMI), a measure of weight by height.
  - You are underweight if your BMI is less than 18.5.
  - You are a healthy weight if your BMI is 18.5 to 24.9.
  - You are overweight if your BMI is 25 to 29.9.
  - You are obese if your BMI is 30 or greater.

### **What are the benefits of maintaining a healthy weight?**

- You will have greater energy and stamina.
- You can prevent or control many diseases and conditions. If you

are overweight or obese, you increase your risk for diabetes, high blood pressure, cholesterol problems, heart disease, gallbladder disease, female health disorders, arthritis, some types of cancer, and sleep apnea.

### **What can I do to maintain my healthy weight?**

- You can **eat wisely** and choose a variety of low calorie, nutritious foods and beverages in the basic food groups. Make sure to select foods that limit your intake of fats, cholesterol, added sugars, salt, and alcohol. Instead, eat more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains (see the *Eat Wisely* handout).
- You can **be physically active**. For health benefits, you can do at least 2 ½ hours per week of moderate-intensity activity, or 1 ¼ hours per week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, or an equal combination of both. You'll see a difference in your weight and your health (see the *Be Physically Active* handout).
- You'll find that making lifestyle changes that include eating wisely, being physically active, and maintaining a healthy weight are keys to maintaining good health.

### **What if I need to lose weight?**

- Losing even a little will help your health. If you lose as little as 5–10% of your current body weight, you can lower your risks for many diseases.
- A safe weight loss is 1–2 pounds per week. It may take 6 months or more to reach your ultimate goal, but if you make gradual lifestyle changes, you can maintain a healthier weight for life.

**If you have questions about how to make healthy living changes, please talk with your health care team.**



## EAT WISELY

Did you know there are simple actions you can take to eat wisely? By eating wisely, you will maximize your health. Look for a variety of foods including vegetables, fruits and whole grains. Include fat-free or low fat milk products in your diet and try to limit salt, fat, sugar and alcohol.

### **How much vegetables, fruits, and whole grains should I eat every day?**

- Eat fiber-rich vegetables and fruits from fresh, canned, and frozen sources. Aim for 5–9 servings every day (2 ½ cups of vegetables and 2 ½ cups of fruit per day). Look for fruit without added sugar or syrups and vegetables without added salt, butter, or cream sauces.
- Select vegetables from the different vegetable groups. Choose **dark green** (broccoli, kale, spinach); **orange** (carrot, pumpkin, tomato); **legumes** (kidney, pinto and black beans, lentils, peas); **starchy** (potato, corn, plantain) and **others** (beets, eggplant, artichokes, cabbage). Starchy vegetables contain more calories so eat these less often.
- Eat 3 ounces or more of whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta per day. One ounce is about 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of breakfast cereal, or ½ cup of cooked rice or pasta. To see if a



food is a whole grain, check the products list of ingredients. Whole grain should be the first ingredient listed. Examples of whole grain are: whole wheat, brown rice, quinoa, buckwheat, whole oats/oatmeal, whole rye, bulgur (cracked wheat), sorghum, whole grain, barley, or wild rice.

### **How much salt and potassium should I eat?**

- Eat less than 1 teaspoon of salt (about 2,300 mg of sodium) per day. Choose foods with little added salt and prepare foods without adding salt.
- People who are middle-aged or older, have high blood pressure, or who are African American should limit sodium intake to ½ tea spoon of salt (about 1,500 mg of sodium) per day.
- Eat potassium-rich foods, such as vegetables and fruits. Good sources include orange juice, beet greens, white beans, potatoes, tomatoes, tomato paste, and bananas.

### **How much dairy, meat, and protein should I eat?**

- Eat 3 cups per day of fat-free or low-fat milk or milk products, such as yogurt or soft white (cottage) cheese. If you don't consume milk, choose lactose-free milk products and/or calcium-fortified foods and beverages.
- Choose lean meats and poultry. Lean beef cuts include round steaks (top loin, top sirloin, top round) and roasts (round eye, top round, bottom round, round tip, arm, chuck shoulder). Choose cuts labeled **Choice** or **Select**. Avoid **Prime** cuts, which have more fat. Choose cuts with the least visible fat and trim away fat before preparing. Choose extra lean ground beef (at least **90% lean**); 93% or 95% is even better. Drain off fat during cooking.

- Choose a minimum of 8 ounces of seafood each week. Seafood is rich in heart healthy omega-3 fatty acids and includes **fish**, such as salmon, tuna, herring, trout, and tilapia, and **shellfish**, such as shrimp, crab, and oysters.
- You can choose dry beans or peas as a main dish or as part of your meal. Eat 2 or more meatless meals per week. Here are some examples of meatless meals: A meatless meal can be made of chili that has kidney or pinto beans instead of meat. Many soups are also meatless and include split pea, lentil, minestrone or white bean soup. Additional options for meals that do not include meat are black bean enchiladas, rice and beans, veggie or garden burgers, chef salad with garbanzo or kidney beans instead of ham or chicken.
- Choose nuts as a snack, or place them in salads or main dishes. Use nuts to **replace** meat or poultry. Use pine nuts in pesto sauce, slivered almonds on steamed vegetables, toasted peanuts or cashews in vegetable stir-fry, and walnuts or pecans in salads instead of cheese or meat.

### **What about fats?**

- When you select and prepare meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, and milk or milk products, choose lean (skinless), low-fat, or fat-free varieties. Don't add fat when you cook them.
- Capture flavor and retain nutrients in your food without adding fat or salt with these cooking methods: bake, broil, braise, roast, steam, sauté, poach, grill, or stir-fry.
- Look for foods low in saturated fats, *trans* fats, and cholesterol by using the Nutrition Fact Labels on food products. A Daily Value

listed as 5% is low, whereas 20% is high.

- Avoid foods that contain *trans* fats. *Trans* fats are found in commercial baked goods (cookies, crackers, pies). Some restaurants use oils with *trans* fats for frying.
- Eat heart-healthy fats (polyunsaturated and monounsaturated) found in fish, nuts, and most vegetable oils. Limit saturated fats found in high-fat cheeses, high-fat cuts of meat, whole-fat milk, cream, butter, ice cream, palm kernel and coconut oils.
- Eat less cholesterol containing animal-based foods (meats, poultry, egg yolks, whole milk). You should limit egg yolks to 1 per day. Choose egg whites or pasteurized egg white products as substitutes for whole eggs.

### **What about alcoholic beverages?**

- If you are female, limit yourself to one drink per day or less. If you are male, limit yourself to two drinks per day or less. Alcohol adds calories to your diet without providing any nutrition.

### **What else can I do if I'm over age 50?**

- If you are over 50, get enough **vitamin B12** by eating fish, meat, poultry, eggs, milk or milk products. The best sources of vitamin B12 are fortified breakfast cereals, fish/seafood (trout, salmon, sockeye, tuna, clams), and supplements.
- If you are over 50, or if you have dark skin, or if you don't get exposed to enough sunlight, get extra **vitamin D** from vitamin D-fortified foods (cereal, breads, margarine, milk) and/or supplements. Foods high in vitamin D are fish liver oils (cod liver oil); fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines, tuna, eel); shitake

mushrooms, and eggs.

**What else can I do if I'm a woman of childbearing age or I'm in my first trimester of pregnancy?**

- Eat enough **vitamin C**-rich fruits (orange, orange juice, cantaloupe, strawberries, kiwi, guava, mango) and vegetables (broccoli, asparagus, tomato, tomato juice, potato, green and red peppers). Eating vitamin C-rich foods along with iron-rich foods helps your body to absorb iron.
- Get **iron** from animal sources (turkey, beef, mussels, shrimp, clams, liver). Iron is also found in vegetable sources (enriched cereals, cooked beans, blackstrap molasses, and enriched pasta) but is not as easily absorbed.
- Get enough **folic acid** daily from fortified foods or supplements. Include fortified breakfast cereals, whole-wheat products, leafy green vegetables, asparagus, oranges, liver, eggs, beans (kidney, black, lima), and sunflower seeds.

**If you have questions about how to make healthy living changes, please talk with your health care team.**



## **LIMIT ALCOHOL**

### **What are the health risks associated with drinking?**

- For many adults, drinking small amounts of alcohol does not cause health problems.
- If you drink too much alcohol, or if you binge drink, you are at a higher risk of health problems, such as liver damage or other injuries.

### **What is one drink?**

- 12 oz. regular beer OR
- 8–9 oz. malt liquor OR
- 5 oz. table wine OR
- 1.5 oz. 80-proof hard liquor

### **How do I know if I am binge drinking?**

- You are binge drinking:
  - if you are female and you drink more than three drinks on one occasion.
  - if you are male and you drink more than four drinks on one occasion.
  - if you are over 65 and you drink more than three drinks on one occasion.

### **How much is too much?**

- If you are female, on average, you should not drink more than one drink per day (seven drinks per week).
- If you are male, you should not drink more than two drinks per day

(14 drinks per week).

### **Who should not drink alcohol?**

- Children and teenagers.
- People who plan to drive, operate machines, or take part in other activities that require attention, skill, or coordination.
- People of any age who cannot limit their drinking to the recommended levels.
- Women who are pregnant or who plan to become pregnant.
- People who take certain medications that interact with alcohol.
- People with certain medical conditions.
- People who are recovering from alcohol dependence (alcoholism).

### **Can alcohol dependence be treated?**

- If you are dependent on alcohol, effective treatment is available.
- Effective treatments include individual counseling, group treatments, medications to reduce craving or prevent relapse, and inpatient or residential treatment.
- Remember, you can always talk with your VA health care team about the resources VA has available that can help you.



## **BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE**

Did you know that less than half of U.S. adults get enough physical activity? No matter what your age or body type, you can benefit from even small amounts of activity. You should avoid inactivity.

### **What are the benefits of being physically active?**

- You will have greater energy and stamina.
- You may reduce your chances for developing diseases, such as depression, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, stroke, and some kinds of cancer.

### **How much physical activity do I need?**

- Aim for at least 2 ½ hours each week of moderate-intensity physical activity. This means that when you move, you can talk but you can't sing. Try it! Choose activities you enjoy, such as walking fast, dancing, and raking leaves.
- To begin, get your body moving. Start at a level that is comfortable. When this level seems easy, add a little more activity each time. Every 10-minute session counts.
- You can also choose to aim for 1 ¼ hours a week of vigorous-intensity physical activity. This means when you move, you can't say more than a few words without pausing for a breath. Try activities like jogging, jumping rope, swimming laps, or riding a bike uphill.
- If you choose, you can combine both moderate- and vigorous-

intensity activity.

- Even if you are out of shape or if you haven't been active for a long time, you can begin to be active safely.
- If you have a chronic condition (such as diabetes, heart disease, or arthritis) or a health condition that concerns you, talk with your health care team before you begin.
- Aerobic activity increases your endurance. This means you can stay active for longer periods of time. Aerobic activity is when you move your large muscles for a period of time. You can also feel your heart beating faster and harder than usual. Try it for periods of at least 10 minutes spread out during the week.

### **What other physical activities are good for me?**

- Do strengthening activities at least twice each week. Try to use all the major muscle groups in your body. This means using the muscles in your legs, hips, back, chest, abdomen, shoulders, and arms. To strengthen these muscles, include resistance training or weight lifting. You can create resistance with elastic bands, handheld weights, or your own body weight. The muscles that do the work will strengthen over time.
- Stretching can help you increase flexibility, improve circulation and range of motion in your joints, and relieve stress. It is best to stretch when you are physically active. If you are not active on a regular basis, stretching at least three times each week is a good starting point.

**If you have questions about how to make healthy living changes, please talk with your health care team.**





## **BE SAFE**

### **How do I prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?**

- STIs can be passed to another person during sex. You can protect yourself from STIs by abstaining from sex. If you are sexually active, use a latex condom every time you have sex (vaginal, anal, or oral) if your partner is or might be infected.
- You can also decrease your number of sexual partners to reduce your risk.
- If you are in a mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner (you and your partner have sex only with each other), you can reduce your risk of developing STIs.

### **What are the symptoms of STIs?**

- Unfortunately, many STIs do not have symptoms. This means you can have an STI without knowing it. If you think you may have an STI or have been exposed, talk to your health care provider.
- STIs can also be passed from a pregnant woman to her baby before or during the baby's birth. If you are pregnant, get tested for STIs and seek appropriate treatment if the test is positive to avoid passing the infection to the baby.

### **How are STIs treated?**

- Some STIs can be cured with antibiotics if they are treated early. Untreated STIs can cause serious health problems, such as

infertility.

- If you are treated for an STI, your sex partner(s) should also be treated to prevent re-infecting you.

### **How dangerous are falls in the home?**

- Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths. About half of all falls happen at home. Falls are also the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma.
- If you or a loved one has fallen recently or has balance problems, make sure your home is safe. You can request a home safety assessment from your VA health care team.

### **What can I do to prevent falls in my home?**

- You can prevent tripping and falling by removing small throw rugs. If you choose to use them, use double-sided tape or anti-slip mats underneath the rug.
- You can improve the lighting in your home. As you get older, you need brighter lights to help you see well. Hang light-weight curtains or shades to reduce glare.
- Wear shoes inside and outside the house. Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers.
- Remove things (papers, books, clothes, shoes) from stairs and places where you walk, so you will be less likely to trip.
- Keep items you use often in cabinets that you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Make sure you use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower

floors.

- Install grab bars next to your toilet and in your tub or shower. Also install handrails and lights in all staircases.
- If you can engage in regular physical activity, especially strengthening exercises, you may reduce your risk of falling by increasing strength and balance (see the *Be Physically Active* handout).

### **How do I prevent motor vehicle crashes and injuries?**

- Don't drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs or ride with somebody who is.
- Impaired driving is dangerous and causes more than half of all motor vehicle crashes.
- You can reduce your chances and your loved ones' chances of dying from a motor vehicle-related injury by correctly using seat belts and car seats. Wear seat belts in cars and helmets on motor cycles and bicycles.
- Don't text message or talk on a cell phone while driving. Pull far over to the side of the road away from traffic.
- Be aware that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death in Veterans in the early years after returning home from deployment.



## **GET RECOMMENDED SCREENING TESTS AND IMMUNIZATIONS**

Did you know it is important to keep up with your screening tests and immunizations? To prevent certain kinds of illness, talk with your health care team about the screenings and immunizations that you may need. All preventive services have benefits and harms. Depending on your preferences, you may wish to receive additional, fewer, or different services. Refer to the websites below to see which preventive services are recommended for you.

### **What screening tests should I get?**

- Most Veterans should be screened for alcohol abuse, depression, high blood pressure, HIV, military sexual trauma, obesity, PTSD, and tobacco use.
- VA recommends other screening tests based on age, gender, health status, and family history.
- Talk with your health care team about additional screening tests that are right for you.

### **How do I know which immunizations I should get?**

- Most Veterans should receive a flu shot every year and tetanus shot once every 10 years.
- VA recommends other immunizations based on age, gender, and health status.
- Talk with your health care team about additional immunizations that are right for you.

**What screening tests and immunizations should I get if I am pregnant or considering pregnancy?**

- If you are a woman who is considering pregnancy, check with your health care team about recommended screening tests and immunizations.



## **BE TOBACCO FREE**

### **What harm does tobacco use cause?**

- Did you know that all forms of tobacco use are harmful? This includes cigars, pipes, snuff, snus, chewing tobacco, and electronic or smokeless cigarettes.
- In fact, tobacco and secondhand smoke kill approximately 443,000 people in the U.S. each year. It is the largest cause of preventable illness and death in the United States.
- Tobacco use causes cancers, heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). If you are pregnant, tobacco use can cause complications of pregnancy.

### **What is secondhand smoke and why is it a problem?**

- You have probably heard of secondhand smoke. Secondhand smoke is inhaled by people when they are exposed to someone else who is smoking.
- There is no level of secondhand smoke that is safe. Even brief exposure is dangerous.
- Nonsmokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke at home or work are 20% to 30% more likely to develop heart disease or lung cancer.
- In babies and children, secondhand smoke is associated with

sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), acute lung infections, ear problems, and more frequent and severe asthma attacks.

- If you already have heart disease, you are at especially high risk when you breathe secondhand smoke. It can have immediate harmful effects on your health and can increase the risk of heart attack.

### **What are the benefits of quitting smoking?**

- Many good things happen as soon as you quit. You can feel good about protecting your health by quitting and protecting your family and friends from secondhand smoke.
- You will have more energy and breathe easier. And you will discover that food smells and tastes better since you quit.
- You can save money that you can spend on other things, like a vacation.
- You will notice that your clothes, car, and home smell better.
- You will look and feel better. You will have fewer wrinkles, and no stains on your skin and nails.

### **What are the benefits to my baby if I quit smoking while pregnant?**

- Your baby will be healthier and will get more oxygen.
- Your baby will be less likely to be born too soon.
- Your baby will be more likely to come home from the hospital on the same day that you come home.
- Your baby will have fewer colds and ear infections, and will

cough and cry less.

- Your baby will have fewer asthma and wheezing problems.

### **How do I get help with quitting tobacco?**

- Talk with your VA health care team about help with quitting smoking. Your team can help you in several different ways which might include:
  - Medications and tips for quitting, such as setting a date, seeking support, and removing all smoking related things from your home.
  - Meeting with an expert on the team, such as the Health Behavior Coordinator, for support in quitting.
  - Joining a class with other Veterans who are also quitting, led by the hospital's expert in smoking cessation.





## **MANAGING STRESS**

If you are having difficulty coping with the demands in your life, you are experiencing stress. Most of us like some challenges; however, too much stress creates problems in our lives. If you are concerned about too much stress in your life, read the information below.

### **How do I know if I have too much stress?**

- If you have too much stress in your life, your body will let you know. Stress may be experienced in different ways. Some things you may notice include:
  - difficulty concentrating
  - feelings of worry and fear
  - muscle tension
  - sweaty palms
  - heart pounding
  - irritability toward others
  - exhaustion
- If you are overly stressed over a long period of time, it can put your health at risk.
- If you or someone you know is in an emotional crisis, you can call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-TALK.

### **How can I better manage my stress?**

- **Learn problem solving skills.** Improving your problem solving skills can help you cope. Your health care team may offer a class or information sessions on problem solving.
- **Practice relaxation training.** Learning relaxation and mindfulness can help you manage stress. Daily relaxation may protect you from the impact of stress on your body. You can find self-help books on relaxation at libraries and book stores. Your health care team may offer relaxation or mindfulness training.
- **Be physically active.** Take a brisk walk or engage in other physical activities. Regular physical activity is best (see the Be Physically Active handout).
- **Learn to express yourself.** Learning to share your thoughts and feelings in an assertive and respectful manner can help reduce stress. Ask your health care team for guidance.
- **Manage your time.** Make a list of what you need to get done. Then make plans for addressing the issues on the list, and stick to the plan.
- **Practice positive thinking.** Stress is often associated with negative and self-critical thinking. Focus your attention on positive thoughts about yourself, your favorite songs, poems, prayers, or hobbies. Think about things you are grateful for.
- **Plan pleasant activities.** Make time for fun. Plan regular, enjoyable activities and see if this reduces your stress.